## IN THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace paragraph **[0001]** with the following amended paragraph:

**[0001]** The subject invention relates to an energy absorbing steering column assembly for a vehicle, and more particularly to a mechanism of a shift lever assembly of the steering column that is capable of reducing an impact on a driver and improving energy-absorption characteristics of the steering column assembly.

Please replace paragraph **[0002]** with the following amended paragraph:

**[0002]** Contemporary automobiles are equipped with numerous safety features that include air bags and energy absorbing devices connected to a steering column assembly. Energy absorption devices include mechanisms that permit a controlled collapse of the steering column, wherein the air bags, mounted on a wheel of the steering column assembly, are designed to deploy in the event of a collision to provide protection to the driver. In addition to the airbag, adjustable position columns are typically fitted with energy absorbing ~~device~~ devices including ~~an~~ energy absorbing straps or the like, that allow the steering column to collapse during a collision at a controlled rate when impacted by the driver to offer additional protection to the driver.

Please replace paragraph **[0003]** with the following amended paragraph:

**[0003]** Differences in the steering column assembly designs include a fixed column assembly, a tilt column assembly, and a telescoping column assembly. These columns include a housing to engage various components of the steering column assembly including and not limited to warning flasher control devices, turn signal switches, ignition key port, windshield and washer control levers, an anti-theft device[[s]], and a shift lever.

Please replace paragraph **[0007]** with the following amended paragraph:

**[0007]** There is a constant need in the area of a steering column assembly design to provide a gear shift assembly capable of reducing impact on a driver and improving energy-absorption characteristics of the steering column assembly by pivoting a lever of the gear shift assembly in the direction transverse to the direction of the steering column assembly during the collision of the vehicle thereby improving the crashworthiness response and effectiveness of energy

absorption system of the vehicle and reducing the likelihood of injury of the driver during the collision of the vehicle.